

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5933

INFO AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, MT, LY

SUBJ: QADHAFI VISIT TO MALTA

REF: VALLETTA 1900, 1910

1. SECOND TWENTY-FOUR HOURS OF QADHAFI'S VISIT TO MALTA WERE A CONTINUATION OF THE FIRST DAY'S ROUND OF PUBLIC APPEARANCES AND MEETINGS WITH GOM OFFICIALS. MINTOFF'S CHEERING CROWDS AGAIN WERE VERY MUCH IN EVIDENCE WHEREVER QADHAFI APPEARED.
2. ON THE MORNING OF DECEMBER 20, QADHAFI LAID A WREATH AT MALTA'S WAR MEMORIAL, FOLLOWING WHICH HE WAS ESCORTED BY MOUNTED CAVALRY GUARD TO PALACE SQUARE IN VALLETTA FOR AN OFFICIAL CALL ON PRESENT MAMO.
3. AFTER HIS CALL, QADHAFI AND MAMO WALKED ACROSS THE CROWEDED SQUARE FROM THE PALACE TO THE NEW LIBYAN CULTURAL CENTER FOR ITS OFFICIAL OPENING. NUMEROUS GOM OFFICIALS PARTICIPATED IN THE CEREMONY IN ADDITION TO PRESIDENT MAMO.
4. DURING THE CULTURAL CENTER OPENING, QADHAFI MADE AN "IMPROMPTU" SPEECH IN ARABIC TO THE CROWD, WHICH WAS TRANSLATED BY ONE OF HIS AIDES INTO ENGLISH. IN HIS REMARKS, QADHAFI

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EMPHASIZED THAT THE LIBYAN AND MALTESE PEOPLES HAVE A "MUTUAL

HERITAGE" AND ARE "BROTHERS," AND CALLED FOR CLOSER POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND CULTURAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

5. HOWEVER, FOR THE FIRST TIME DURING HIS VISIT, QADHAFI STRAYED FROM HIS PUBLIC IMAGE AS THE EXCESSIVELY FRIENDLY VISITING HEAD OF STATE TO UNMASK THE STEEL BENEATH HIS SMILES. IN DISCUSSING LIBYA'S CULTURAL CENTER, HE LASHED OUT AT WHAT THE WEST HAD DONE IN MALTA INSTEAD, I.E., "OPENED MILITARY BASES OF DESTRUCTION." QADHAFI ADDED: "WE HAVE TO COMPARE; HERE WE HAVE A CENTER FOR CULTURE, AND THERE IS A BRITISH BASE FOR WAR AND DESTRUCTION. WE HOPE THE MALTESIAN CENTER COMPARE THE CENTER TO THE BASE".

6. CONSERVATIVE, PRO-BRITISH SUNDAY TIMES OF MALTA CALLED THESE REMARKS BY QADHAFI "AN UNCALLED FOR POLITICAL EXPRESSION OF THE COLONEL'S VIEWS WHICH ARE DEFINITELY NOT SHARED BY THE PEOPLE OF MALTA AND GOZO. THE BRITISH MILITARY PRESENCE ON THE ISLAND IS BY AGREEMENT WITH THE MALTESE GOVERNMENT AND BY THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE OF INDEPENDENT BUT OTHERWISE DEFENSELESS MALTA AND GOZO; TWO ISLANDS WHICH ANY AGGRESSIVE POWER COULD OCCUPY OVERNIGHT.... DEFENSE, AS COLONEL QADHAFI SEES IT, IS CERTAINLY NOT CHRISTIAN EUROPEAN MALTA'S DEFENSE, BUT THAT OF AN ISLAMIC BLOC WITH HIMSELF AT THE SUMMIT". COMMENT: MANY MALTESE SHARE THE VIEWS OF THE SUNDAY TIMES AND ARE NOT AT ALL INTERESTED IN "CLOSER" RELATIONS WITH LIBYA AT THE EXPENSE OF MALTA'S BRITISH TIES. END COMMENT

7. DURING THE AFTERNOON, QADHAFI HAD LUNCH AND A SECOND MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER MINTOFF, FOLLOWED BY A VISIT TO MALTA'S COLLEGE OF ARTS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (MCAST). IN THE EVENING, HE HAD A THIRD MEETING WITH MINTOFF AND THEN ATTENDED A FORMAL DINNER GIVEN IN HIS HONOR BY PRESIDENT MAMO.

8. ONCE AGAIN, DURING A DISCUSSION HE HAD WITH STUDENTS AT MCAST, QADHAFI COULD NOT RESIST USING HIS MALTESE SOUNDING BOARD TO TWIST THE TAIL OF THE BRITISH LION. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ABOUT REPORTED LIBYAN ASSISTANCE TO THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY, QADHAFI SAID THAT IT WAS "LIBYA'S DUTY TO HELP PEOPLE WHO WERE FIGHTING TO WIN THEIR FREEDOM."

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9. ON THE MORNING OF DECEMBER 21, QADHAFI WAS AFFORDED THE UNUSUAL HONOR OF PARTICIPATING IN AN INFORMAL SITTING OF MALTA'S PARLIAMENT, DURING WHICH GOM DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER ANTON BUTTIGIEG, DEPUTY OPPOSITION LEADER VINCENT TABONE, AND QADHAFI EXCHANGED STATEMENTS OF FRIENDSHIP AND CORDIALITY. TABONE DID, HOWEVER, ALLUDE TO IMPORTANT "POINTS OF DIFFERENCE" BETWEEN MALTA AND LIBYA WHICH WERE NOT APPROPRIATE FOR DISCUSSION ON

THAT OCCASION. FOLLOWING THE MEETING WITH PARLIAMENT, QADHAFI WAS GIVEN A FORMAL SEND-OFF AT THE AIRPORT BY PRESIDENT MAMO AND PRIME MINISTER MINTOFF TO CLOSE HIS VISIT TO MALTA.

10. COMMENT: QADHAFI'S VISIT, FROM MINTOFF'S STANDPOINT, WAS A GREAT PUBLIC SUCCESS. RUMBLES OF DISCONTENT OVER HIS WARM EMBRACE OF HIS ARAB "BROTHER" WILL NOT DETER MINTOFF IN THE LEAST. AS EXPECTED, REAL PROBLEMS SUCH AS THE MEDIAN LINE DISPUTE AND ESSENTIAL OIL SUPPLIES FOR MALTA'S ECONOMY WERE ONLY DISCUSSED BEHIND CLOSED DOORS. OFFICIAL GOM COMMUNIQUE ON QADHAFI VISIT, BEING TRANSMITTED VIA UNCLSSIFIED SEPTTEL, DID NOT REFER TO EITHER OF THESE KEY ISSUES. SMITH

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